

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02 CIEP-01

LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 L-02 INT-05 /050 W

----- 019308

R 070900Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 980

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EINV, EIND, EMIN SL

SUBJECT: SRL AND GOSL BETHSTEEL NEGOTIATIONS

REF: STATE 072526

1. DURING CONVERSATION ON ANOTHER MATTER, APRIL 1, I RAISED WITH PRESIDENT STEVENS CONCERN IN WASHINGTON AND ESPECIALLY AT EXIM BANK THAT FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOSL AND BETHLEHEM STEEL NEGOTIATORS NEXT WEEK COULD LEAD TO BETHSTEEL'S CEASING INTEREST IN SRL ACTIVITIES. I POINTED OUT THAT BETHSTEEL HAD EXPENDED CLOSE TO THREE-QUARTERS MILLION DOLLARS OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS DURING WHICH TIME NEGOTIATIONS WERE SOMETIMES ACTIVE AND SOMETIMES DILATORY. EXIM WAS ANXIOUS THAT THE PRESIDENT UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE THAT BETHSTEEL PLACED ON NEXT WEEK'S NEGOTIATIONS. SHOULD THEY NOT SUCCEED, BETHSTEEL MIGHT DECIDE TO CUT ITS LOSSES.

2. THE PRESIDENT SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WAS SYMPATHETIC TO BETHSTEEL. RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH LIBERIAN OFFICIALS HAD INDICATED BETHSTEEL'S BONA FIDES. PRESIDENT WAS ANXIOUS TO SEE BETHSTEEL OPERATING IN SIERRA LEONE. HE BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE IN HIS

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CABINET KNEW WHAT IT MEANT FOR A MINE TO FAIL. MANY

OF HIS CABINET MINISTERS DID NOT BELIEVE THAT A MINE
COULD STOP FUNCTIONING. HE HAD SEEN IT. AND HE DIDN'T
WANT IT TO HAPPEN AGAIN.

3. STEVENS FAILED TO BE SPECIFIC ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD
OF SUCCESS IN NEXT WEEKS' NEGOTIATIONS. IT WAS NOT
CLEAR FROM HIS CONVERSATION THAT HE WAS EVEN AWARE
SPECIFICALLY OF NEXT WEEKS' TALKS.

4. GIST OF ABOVE CONVERSATIONS PASSED TO DAVID FRASER,
VICE PRESIDENT, SRL. FRASER SEEMED PLEASED THAT ABOVE
CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE AND THINKS IT MAY HAVE BEEN
HELPFUL TO BETHSTEEL NEGOTIATIONS. FRASER PLANS
TO SEE PRESIDENT HIMSELF LATER THIS WEEK AND TO
ARRANGE COURTESY CALL FOR BETHSTEEL NEGOTIATORS NEXT
WEEK.
SAMUELS

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